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Family Galleries: Women and Art in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries

Rosemary O'Day

☞ **CASSANDRA WILLOUGHBY BRYDGES**, first Duchess of Chandos (1670–1735), was an unusual woman. She was married to one of the great patrons and art collectors of the eighteenth century, James Brydges, first Duke of Chandos, and she was herself an artist. She also left behind a remarkable variety of personal papers ranging from diaries and letters to historical writings and travel journals.¹ One of the tasks before the historian must be to determine the extent and nature of what sets her apart from other elite women of the period. Is it the survival of a rich archive or the nature of her activity? Her papers, which make clear that her artistic work was amateur but expert, give rise to a number of questions concerning elite women and art. When were “ordinary” English girls taught to draw and paint? What is known of women as practitioners of the visual arts during the period 1500–1800? Did their involvement in these arts, 1670–1820, discussed in a number of recent studies, really represent a break with the recent past? Was there a sharp divide between women who painted for the “public” and women who painted and drew in “private”? What and why did early modern women draw and paint? To what uses were their artistic works put? Here I have approached these questions from the perspective of a social and family historian, not an art historian, although I hope that this article will make a valuable contribution to several disciplines and discussions.

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1. Cassandra Willoughby, who hailed from an old but not well-off Nottinghamshire and Warwickshire gentry family, married James Brydges, the first duke, at the age of forty-three. See Rosemary O'Day, *Women's Agency in Early Modern Britain and the North American Colonies* (London, 2007), and *Cassandra Brydges (1670–1735), First Duchess of Chandos* (Woodbridge, U.K., 2007). Also see Susan Jenkins, “The Patronage and Collecting of James Brydges, 1st Duke of Chandos (1674–1744)” (University of Bristol, Ph.D. thesis, 2001). Henceforward, the city of publication is London unless otherwise indicated.

Historians have generally sought to place women artists in the context of male “professional art,” and consequently have often concluded that there were few women artists in England prior to the eighteenth century, especially ones who painted for a public audience. They have paid little attention to female “amateur” painters (if indeed there were any), simply viewing those who painted commercially as exceptional. The examples they have drawn from the seventeenth century were unusual women, often those who hailed from families or workshops of artists or from unconventional backgrounds. Examples include Joan Palmer Carlisle (1606–1679), daughter of William Palmer, an official in the royal parks, regarded as probably the first female English portrait painter, who attracted the praise of contemporary male artists of the first rank, including Van Dyck, and royal patrons; and Mary Beale (1633–ca. 1697), who supported her family by portrait painting, largely for a fashionable and clerical clientele.² The Beales moved in the circles of the early Royal Society and were also close friends of Sir Peter Lely, who loaned Mary paintings to copy and was a great admirer of her work.³

Several female “public” painters belonged to immigrant families. Maria Verelst (1680–1744) and Adriana Verelst (see n. 126, below) were probably both members of the Verelst family of portrait painters. Artemesia Gentileschi (1593–1653) and Angelica Kauffman (1741–1807) were also foreigners who made a living and a reputation from painting.

By the seventeenth century there are also a few references to women of the middling sort who engaged in painting for public viewing. Their work seems frequently to have fallen into that category that today might be called interior design or decorating. A firm of painters, for example, employed to decorate the king’s house at Theobalds, was headed by Widow Stanhopp (ca. 1625–26). Other women produced religious works for churches: Widow Margaret Pearce (ca. 1670–1680), who probably belonged to a family of artists, painted an altarpiece at St. Bartholomew Exchange that contained the image of the Ten Commandments and the figures of Aaron and Moses; an altarpiece at St. Michael Bassishaw was painted by Mary Grimes (ca. 1679).⁴

2. Anne Crawford et al., eds., *The Europa Biographical Dictionary of British Women* (1983), 78. C. H. Collins Baker and W. G. Constable, in *English Painting of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries* (Paris, 1930), made it clear that portrait painting by English men predated Carlisle (Carlisle’s painting of the stag hunt belongs to the Lamport Hall Trust). Sarah Broman and Anne Killigrew were also noteworthy. Anne died at age twenty-five but was already an accomplished portraitist.

3. Bod[leian] Lib[rary], MS. Rawlinson 8° 572, Charles Beale Sr.’s diary entries for 1676/7 in William Lilly’s “Almanack”; see also Charles Beale’s pocketbook for 1680/1, National Gallery, MS. 9535, and Tabitha Barber, “Introduction,” in David Dewing, ed., *Mary Beale (1632/3–1699): Portrait of a Seventeenth-Century Painter, Her Family, and Studio* (1999). The fashion for portraits of both upper and lower clergy and their wives certainly predated the Beales. See, for example, the portrait of Immanuel Bourne (1621), rescued from Ashover Rectory, Derbyshire, and a later one (?1670s) of his wife, Jemima, both in the Ashover Collection in Derby Public Library. Frances Reynolds (1729–1807), younger sister of Joshua Reynolds, provides a further example of a tradition of painting within a family—although, as Germaine Greer explains, she was scarcely encouraged by her brother. Her portrait of Hannah More is owned by the Bristol Art Gallery. See Germaine Greer, *The Obstacle Race: The Fortunes of Women Painters and Their Work* (New York, 1979), 30–32.

4. See Anne Laurence, *Women in England, 1500–1760: A Social History* (New York, 1994), 158. Elizabeth Pickering (1642–1728) painted altarpieces in parish churches near Oundle, Northamptonshire; Greer, *Obstacle Race*, 280–91.

Limning—that is, miniature painting—also provided employment for several women: Susannah Penelope Rose, the daughter of Richard Gibson, drawing master to the princesses Mary and Anne, was an accomplished miniaturist. She may have been taught by Samuel Cooper, and by the 1690s she was given commissions, albeit unpaid ones.⁵ Mrs. Cawardine (ca. 1730–ca. 1800) also took commissions for limning. Maria (Hadfield) Cosway (1759/60–1838) was a successful miniaturist who worked alongside her husband. There were also some noted female calligraphers, such as Esther Inglis (1571–1624)⁶ and Susanna Perwich (d. 1661), and calligraphy had an accepted association with miniature painting.⁷ The inference is clear: women painters chiefly emanated from “artistic” circles, and elite women, if they drew or painted at all, did not paint or draw for a public audience.

Art historians, for their part, have tended to dismiss female interest in art as amateur, practical, and non-intellectual. Iain Pears, for example, quotes Mary Astell’s dismissal of art as a demonstration of “the mindless occupations which kept women from real learning.” Although Pears cites the example of Lady Lempster, who penned a biography of Van Dyck, he sees her as exceptional in displaying “intellectual” interest in art, and he insists that “the appreciation of the arts was increasingly considered to be a masculine preserve” from 1680 to 1769. The Duchess of Portland and Lady Betty Germaine serve, as it were, to prove the rule that women were incapable of appreciating art.⁸ Pears considers virtually no evidence to the contrary, concentrating on data from printed books rather than manuscripts or published correspondence.

There are, of course, scholars who have sought to challenge these assumptions about gender and the practice of art, and the underlying distinctions between public and private, amateur and professional, and intellectual and practical art. In *Learning to Draw* (2000) Ann Bermingham has offered illuminating discussions of the ways in which the practice of art became gendered. Some arts, and particularly those beloved by women, became categorized as “crafts,” and works produced by these means were not considered part of the canon. Certain activities, notably flower painting, were effectively excluded from the academy, at least partly because they were seen as “feminine.” The “feminization” of drawing, however, is depicted as a *late* eighteenth- and nineteenth-century phenomenon in Bermingham’s study. Examining earlier (and especially manuscript and printed primary) sources may make it possible to push these boundaries further into the past.

5. Mary and Anne were later Queen Mary II and Queen Anne. See Carol Gibson-Wood, “Susanna and Her Elders: John Evelyn’s Artistic Daughter,” in Frances Harris and Michael Hunter, eds., *John Evelyn and His Milieu* (2003), 245–46.

6. See A. H. Scott-Elliott and E. Yeo, “Calligraphic Manuscripts of Esther Inglis (1571–1624): A Catalogue,” in *The Papers of the Bibliographic Society of America* 84 (1990): 11–63.

7. Limning, miniature painting, was originally associated with illuminated manuscripts. An excellent illustration of the close relationship between calligraphy and limning is provided by Huntington Library MS. (hereafter HEH), STT Literature and Religion Box 1, Religious Folder, Item 13. The six-line verse includes the line, “By art the hand each severall work is tought.” It is beautifully penned, framed with a decoration resembling peacock feathers and signed “Francis Temple.”

8. See Iain Pears, *The Discovery of Painting: The Growth of Interest in the Arts in England, 1680–1768* (1988), 186–87—the only pages he devotes to the discussion of female interest in art; see also p. 3.

The quality as well as the quantity of available evidence is a major issue, and some historians have given credence to anecdotal and often retrospective references to art by women. In what follows, I rely as much as possible on primary sources, including manuscripts and printed original documents and correspondence. For the moment, gathering such evidence as survives seems a necessary first step to discovering what part art, and especially portraiture, played in the lives of early modern women.

It certainly appears that painting and drawing played little or no recognized part as *separate* skills in English women's (or in men's) general education prior to the later seventeenth century. The creative arts for women were apparently represented by music and by embroidery and other needlework.⁹ Girls with intellectual pretensions, such as Lady Jane Grey, were not taught specifically to draw and paint, nor were elite young women who fully participated in fashionable life at Court. For instance, Lady Arbella Stuart in the late Elizabethan era was taught embroidery, singing, and dancing, and to play the lute and viol, but the evidence does not mention drawing or painting.¹⁰ Specific references to the instruction of women in drawing and painting seem to be absent from the relevant fifteenth- and sixteenth-century correspondence. In the late sixteenth century a girls' boarding school intended for daughters of the elite could still advertise its curriculum and rates thus:

... sixteen pounds a year a piece, for diet, lodging, washing, and teaching them to work, reading, writing and dancing, this cometh unto £32 a year. But for music you must pay for besides according as you will have them learn. She hath teachers for viol, singing, virginals and lute.¹¹

Prospectuses and advertisements for girls' schools do not specifically mention drawing and painting until the third quarter of the eighteenth century. Provincial schools probably lagged behind those in London.¹²

The teaching of drawing in the English Renaissance was closely associated with the teaching of writing,¹³ however, so we should not be surprised that it was not singled out in such advertisements. Nor can we conclude from accounts of what girls were

9. Susan Frye, "Sewing Connections: Elizabeth Tudor, Mary Stuart, Elizabeth Talbot, and Seventeenth-Century Anonymous Needleworkers," in Susan Frye and Karen Robertson, eds., *Maids and Mistresses, Cousins and Queens: Women's Alliances in Early Modern England* (New York and Oxford, 1999), 165–82.

10. Sarah Gristwood, *Arbella: England's Lost Queen*, paperback ed. (2004), 73, 79–81. On the education of Lady Mary (Sidney) Wroth (ca. 1586/7–ca. 1651–53), see *Historical Manuscripts Commission Report on the Manuscripts of Lord de L'Isle and Dudley, preserved at Penshurst Place*, 6 vols. (1925–66), 2:176; Rowland Whyte to Robert Sidney. At Hardwick Hall cards and board games, plays, music making, orchestral performances, and dances were frequent pastimes, but not painting and drawing—despite Bess of Hardwick's family portrait gallery; see Gristwood, *Arbella*, 121–22.

11. "To work" meant to embroider, stitch, and, possibly, weave. F[olger]S[hakespeare]L[ibrary], Le.644: Anne Higginson to Lady Ferrers at Tamworth Castle, 13 May ?1590s (I have modernized the spelling). I owe the dating of this letter to paleography expert Laetitia Yeandle.

12. For an example, see Derek Robson, *Some Aspects of Education in Cheshire in the Eighteenth Century* (Manchester, 1951), 198–99, 203–5.

13. Juliet Fleming, *Graffiti and the Writing Arts of Early Modern England* (2001), passim.

taught at home that drawing was not being taught to them at all. It is probable that youngsters of both sexes who learned to write were taught some of the elements of drawing, but that it was regarded as a “lower” subject by the grammar schools and universities. Henry Peacham described how “from a child I have been addicted to the practice [of drawing]; yet . . . I have been cruelly beaten by ill and ignorant schoolmasters, when I have been taking, in white and black, the countenance of some one or other (which I could do at thirteen or fourteen years of age)” —and especially when this activity was at the expense of his learning Latin and Greek.¹⁴ If drawing was taught in school it was apparently as a skill to be used in the service of other subjects.

Girls were probably taught to draw more readily than boys because they were not restricted by the classical curriculum, and they then used this skill in the service of patterns for samplers, embroidery, and tapestry making.¹⁵ In sixteenth-century Wiltshire, Lady Grace Sherington was brought up to design her own needlework patterns, and some of these could be very elaborate.¹⁶ Bess of Hardwick’s own appliqué design of the classical story of Penelope, created in the 1570s, suggests Bess’s personal involvement in the narrative.¹⁷ The fashion for turning women’s embroideries into “works of art” continued. Eighteenth-century evidence suggests that this was an ongoing practice rather than a new development—despite Walpole’s assertion that “Miss Gray [later wife of Philip Lloyd, Dean of Norwich] was the first who distinguished herself by so bold an emulation of painting.” Her needlework copy of one of Van Dyck’s paintings of three figures (which commanded a price of £300) was viewed, among many other needlework “paintings,” by Horace Walpole at Earl Spencer’s house at Wimbledon. The wife of the miniaturist Thomas Worlidge became famous, in the contemporary news and periodical press, for her landscapes in embroidery. Walpole commented that Lady Caroline Conway “has not only surpassed several good pictures that she has copied, but works with such rapidity and intelligence, that it is almost more curious to see her pictures in their progress than after they are finished.” He thought that her “old woman spinning, whole length, from Velasco [?Velasquez] [had] greater force than the originals.”¹⁸

Such work required advanced, if conventional, copying skills on the part of the needlewomen. Various books of designs and illustrations survive that bear testimony to their intended audience “for the imitation of young ladies either in drawing or in needlework.” In 1810, Rudolph Ackerman made the connection between needlework and drawing explicit: “drawing and fancy work of endless variety have been raised on the ruins of that heavy, unhealthy, and stupifying occupation, needlework.”¹⁹ Gildon’s

14. Henry Peacham, *The Compleat Gentleman . . . with the Art of Limning* (1634), 127.

15. Dorothy Gardiner, *English Girlhood at School* (Oxford, 1929), 261–62. See Susan Lambert, *Pattern and Design: Designs for the Decorative Arts, 1480–1980* (1983).

16. Dorothy M. Meads, ed., *Diary of Lady Margaret Hoby* (1930), introduction; see also Rosika Parker, *The Subversive Stitch: Embroidery and the Making of the Feminine* (1984), 96–97.

17. See Frye, “Sewing Connections,” 173–74.

18. Horace Walpole, *Anecdotes of Painting*, ed. James Dallaway and Ralph N. Wornum, 3 vols. (1862), 3:719–20.

19. Rudolph Ackerman, “Observations on Fancy Work, as affording an agreeable occupation for ladies,” in *Repository of the Arts, Literature, and Commerce* (March 1810), 192.

much earlier poetic tribute to the Duchess of Chandos (“Now with her readie needle paints the lawn / Where various figures are so finely drawn”) closely links the arts of painting and embroidery, and seems to indicate that Cassandra executed a needlework “painting” of the gardens at Cannons.²⁰

It is dangerous to deduce from silence that ladies either did or did not draw their own embroidery designs throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Some ladies purchased from print shops designs that had already been printed onto cloth—the seventeenth-century equivalent of painting by numbers. As noted above, such designs were indeed likely to be copies. Pattern books were frequently handed down within families.²¹ Bess of Hardwick, for example, and her friend Mary Stuart (Queen of Scots) generally drew their designs from books of patterns that Mary owned, Gesner’s *Icones Animalium* and Mattioli’s *Herbal*. At other times Bess employed a man living in her household to draw the designs. Talent and inclination of course played their part: both Mary and Bess did, on occasion, indulge their own creativity. Mary’s embroidery, “A catte” (after Gesner; now at Holyrood Palace), showed a personified cat, meant to resemble Elizabeth I, closely watching a mouse that was mindful of Mary. A later embroiderer emphasized the point even more bluntly by giving the cat red hair and a crown. Another idiosyncratic small embroidery by the Queen of Scots apparently shows one of Mary’s little dogs. In one of the tapestries at Hardwick worked by Queen Mary, the head of Zenobia, warrior queen of ancient Syria, appears to be a portrait of Bess herself.²²

Female Practitioners from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Centuries

Studies of English women have not revealed any specific examples of well-born girls, before the mid-seventeenth century, engaged in drawing or painting on what has been defined as a high level.²³ There are a few suggestions that artistic pursuits were already popular in elite circles by the 1620s, when the Painter-Stainers’ Company in London (to which professional artists were required to belong) complained of increasing numbers of men and women who, without its permission, drew “and counterfeited the effigies of great and noble personages.”²⁴ During the seventeenth century, however, particularly after the Restoration, a “new” activity apparently attracted the daughters of the aristocracy and the professional classes, or at least such a change was remarked upon. If we delve beneath the thin layer of painting for “public consumption” as recently defined by historians concerned with the public/private divide, we can see that

20. Charles Gildon, “Cannons, or The Vision” (1718).

21. See Frye, “Sewing Connections,” 177–78, 174, and Parker, *Subversive Stitch*, passim, esp. figure 51. Richard Shorleyker’s *Scholehouse of the Needle* (1624) was still being used as a source for sampler figures in the late 1690s.

22. David Durant, *Bess of Hardwick: Portrait of an Elizabethan Dynast* (reprint ed., 2002), 64–65, 66; Mary S. Lovell, *Bess of Hardwick: First Lady of Chatsworth* (2005), passim, and 221.

23. See Barbara J. Harris, *English Aristocratic Women 1450–1550* (Oxford, 2002), 32–39, Sara Mendelson and Patricia Crawford, *Women in Early Modern England* (Oxford, 1998), Anne Laurence, *Women in England 1500–1760: A Social History* (2002), 158–60.

24. Cited in Gardiner, *English Girlhood*, 261.

elite and even some middling-sort women from the 1670s to the 1820s were *expected* to be able to sketch, draw, and paint. If they could not, they seem to have felt deprived. When Mary Fox-Strangeways Talbot came to Penrice as a bride, she found awaiting her “two of the nicest little painted work tables, and the most compleat paint-box with water colours and body colours, crayons and colours in bottles, saucers and pallats,” and these seemed both the most delightful and the most appropriate gift. Later, one of her activities with her children was grinding powders and making paints.²⁵

Almost every archive that documents the lives of such women in any detail in the period 1670–1820 yields information about their artistic endeavors in these areas—painting, drawing, and sketching—of the visual arts. Painting in particular is highlighted. An educated gentlewoman prided herself on accomplishments in these areas, especially in the eighteenth century, it is true, but also in the seventeenth. There are a number of examples showing the continuity of this tradition among young women from a variety of elite backgrounds. Lord Hatton’s daughter Alice had a drawing mistress in the 1690s,²⁶ although women were usually tutored by men. Alexander Browne taught several ladies, including Mrs. Elizabeth Pepys, to draw. Pepys noted her progress in limning and praised one of her paintings as “mighty finely done.” Browne dedicated his book to a pupil, the Duchess of Monmouth.²⁷ Mary Evelyn made a miniature of Raphael’s *Entombment of Christ*, which she was permitted to present to Charles II. In 1701 old John Evelyn showed the visiting Yorkshire antiquary Ralph Thoresby drawings, etchings, miniatures, and other oil paintings made by his wife, Mary, and by their daughter Susanna (b. 1669). Susanna may have attended a drawing master on a trip to London in 1685/6 and was almost certainly taught by a professional at some time thereafter. She may have been taught to paint in oils by one of the artists who made portraits of her family, and taught to paint miniatures by Susannah Rose. She was encouraged by her parents in her art and, on her father’s advice, attended a picture auction in Tunbridge Wells in 1689.²⁸ She specialized in portraits but also worked in still-life and painted biblical subjects. As most amateur artists did, she chiefly copied the works of other painters, and her copies either adorned her home or were given to relatives and friends. In 1694 she copied, on her father’s advice, Matthew Dixon’s portrait of Evelyn’s friend Margaret Godolphin. Then she progressed to making several copies of a painting of Robert Boyle.²⁹ Twice-married Mary Waller More (fl. 1670s) made no fewer than nine copies of Holbein’s portrait of Thomas Cromwell (one of which she donated to the Bodleian Library in 1674 under the misapprehension that it

25. Mary Talbot to Harriet Strangeways, early 1794; cited in Joanna Martin, *Wives and Daughters: Women and Children in the Georgian Country House* (2004), 232. I am grateful to Laetitia Yeandle for information pertaining to “recipes” for colors, contained in many early modern English recipe books.

26. Gardiner, *English Girlhood*, 261.

27. See Alexander Browne, *Ars pictoria: or an academy treating of drawing, painting, limning and etching, to which are added thirty copper plates* (1669). See Greer, *Obstacle Race*, on Elizabeth Pepys as the first amateur lady water-colorist (p. 288).

28. Cf. Pears, who maintains that men were contemptuous of women in the auction houses (*Discovery of Painting*, 187).

29. Gibson-Wood, “Susanna,” 233–54, esp. 242–44.

represented Thomas More). A portrait of the historian John Stow at St. Andrew's Undershaft, her parish church, has also been attributed to More. It was also noted that "in the family are her and her husband's portraits by herself." It appears that a sketch of her son, Richard Waller, accompanying his manuscript translation of *The Aeneid* could be by Mary.³⁰ Lady Anne Killigrew painted a self-portrait circa 1686 and several other portraits of royalty (notably James II) and courtiers.³¹ Lady Dorothy (Savile) Boyle, Countess of Burlington, painted several family portraits in oils, the best being that of her daughter Charlotte (ca. 1740–1745), but she was also an accomplished caricaturist, much admired by Alexander Pope.³² Young women of the upper and professional classes, furthermore, had the necessary leisure to devote to achieving a high standard.

In the decades 1720–40, Mary Delany's entire circle appear to have had instruction in drawing of one kind or another, and she herself received instruction from Hogarth. By the 1750s she was showing her work not only to her closest friends but also to others: "Tomorrow morning the Duchess of Leeds brings Lady Vanbrugh to see my pictures."³³ Cozens, exponent of "blot" landscapes, taught Mary, Countess of Harcourt (d. 1833), in the 1780s. She exhibited paintings in the Royal Academy in 1785 and 1786, some of which have been mistaken for Cozens's own.³⁴ When George Stubbs was selected to paint the Wedgwood family portrait in 1779 he taught the several children (Sukey [1765–1817], Sarah, Kitty, Sally, Jos, Tom, and John) to paint and gave them lessons in perspective.³⁵ Paul Sandby (1725/31–1809) was a popular drawing master who specialized in landscapes and topography: he probably tutored Lady Frances Scott, and in about 1780 he depicted her in riding costume, sketching a scene outdoors with the help of a camera obscura.³⁶ Arthur Pond was another artist who helped make ends meet by instructing the daughters of wealthy men.³⁷ Joanna Martin has noted the

30. Horace Walpole, *Anecdotes of Painting*, 3:622–23; cited in Margaret Ezell, *The Patriarch's Wife: Literary Evidence and the History of the Family* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1987), 145–46. [British]L[ibrary], Add. MS. 27347; also cited by Ezell (p. 148).

31. For a reproduction of the self-portrait, see Mary Prior, *Women in English Society, 1500–1800* (1985), plate 18. The self-portrait is in the collection of the Earl of Berkeley; *Women's Art Show, 1550–1970*, exhibition catalogue, Nottingham Castle Museum, 1982.

32. See M. de Novellis, *Pallas Unveiled: The Life and Art of Lady Dorothy Savile, Countess of Burlington*, exhibition catalogue, Orleans House Gallery, Twickenham (1999).

33. Mary Delany, *Autobiography and Correspondence*, 3 vols. (1861), 3:478–80; Mrs. Delany to Mrs. Dewes from Spring Gardens, 3 February 1757/8.

34. Kim Sloan, in "The Teaching of Non-professional Artists in Eighteenth-Century England" (University of London, Ph.D. thesis, 1986), lists all of Cozens's pupils (pp. 329–56).

35. Edna Healey, *Emma Darwin: The Inspirational Wife of a Genius* (2001), 26–27. All also had the opportunity of lessons from Joseph Wright of Derby (p. 24). See also Alice Fairfax-Lucy, ed., *Mistress of Charlecote: The Memoirs of Mary Elizabeth Lucy*, paperback ed. (1985), on Mary Elizabeth Williams, who describes herself as a teenager in the 1810s who was "passionately fond of music and drawing" (p. 18).

36. Paul Sandby, *Lady Frances Scott and Lady Elliot*, ca. 1780, is illustrated in Robert Irwin, *The Art of Paul Sandby* (New Haven, Conn., 1985); see Bermingham, *Learning to Draw*, 81–83, where Sandby is said to have been sixteen in 1747; Harold Osborne, in *The Oxford Companion to Art* (Oxford, 1970), lists Sandby's date of birth as 1725/6 (p. 1034).

37. L. W. Lippincott, *Selling Art in Georgian London: The Rise of Arthur Pond* (1983), 38–40.

artistic endeavors of the Talbot daughters in the late eighteenth century. In 1794 their drawing master was paid £5.19s.6d for his services.³⁸ At approximately the same time Lord Ilchester's younger daughters were said to be progressing well in drawing. Harriet Strangeways was taught drawing in black-and-white crayons at her Weymouth boarding school in the 1790s.³⁹ In 1813 Susan O'Brien, visiting Medbury with the new Lady Ilchester and their nieces, praised the drawing room there as "like an academy of arts—not trumpery arts of box-making and cutting paper, but painting and music to please the most knowing connoisseurs."⁴⁰ Louise Gurney (ca. 1783–1836), younger daughter of a well-to-do Norfolk Quaker family, was receiving drawing lessons in 1798.⁴¹ Jos Wedgwood singled out his daughter Charlotte (1797–1862), who showed artistic flair, for special tuition in painting from Copley Fielding.⁴² In 1827 Charlotte, encouraged by her brother Harry, put her drawings and paintings up for sale at a bazaar in aid of Greek refugees. Heartened by its success she repeated the sale in support of a fever ward at the local infirmary. Harry commented, "Charlotte's drawings came to great honour. A gentleman paid two pounds for them."⁴³

Women might learn to draw and paint in town, but when they retired to the countryside, drawing and painting were apparently accepted as a more central part of their repertoire of activities. Margaret Harley contrasted in 1738 her life in London and in the provinces:

But you are sensible what a hurry one lives in there [London] & particularly after being confined some months that is I mean from publick diversions How much one is engaged in them Operas Park assemblies Vaux Hall . . . My amusements are all of the rural kind working [embroidering] spinning knotting drawing reading writing walking & picking herbs to put in an herbal.⁴⁴

Why Did Elite Women Paint and Draw?

It is unsurprising that drawing and painting became fashionable, given the popularity of collecting paintings among the upper and middle classes from the mid-seventeenth century onward.⁴⁵ That drawing, sketching, and painting were apparently an accepted part of a young woman's repertoire probably also owes a good deal to the emergence of several elite "crazes": for family history, genealogy, and for likenesses of living family

38. Evidence of the skill they developed is provided by charming water-colors, ca. 1815; see Martin, *Wives and Daughters*, 221.

39. Harriet Strangeways to Mary Strangeways, 12 April 1791; cited *ibid.*, 232.

40. BL, Add. MS. 51359; Susan O'Brien's Journal, 19 January 1813.

41. Louisa Gurney's Journals, Norfolk Record Office, MS. 1.12.66: II:1797–1799; cited in Bermingham, *Learning to Draw*, 197.

42. Healey, *Emma Darwin*, 68. I owe this reference, and others from the same book, to Yvonne Alton.

43. Cited *ibid.*, 111.

44. HEH, MO 176, Duchess of Portland to Elizabeth (Robinson) Montagu, 30 June 1738.

45. Pears, *Discovery of Painting*, esp. 181–206.

members;⁴⁶ for collecting, classifying, and recording;⁴⁷ and for touring and topography.⁴⁸ Mary Delany's descriptions of her delight in many types of collecting suggest that the social aspect of such activities was important; in a letter written from Ireland in 1732 she told her sister of their daily joys: gathering shells (while one of them sings), taking the shells to the grotto, working in the grotto, "shewing the elegancy of your fancy, praising your companion's works, and desiring approbation for what you have finished."⁴⁹ Although there were devotees of both sexes, women seem to have given more time and attention to these activities and to the artistic expression allied to them. Perhaps this was because women were freed from the tight bands of a formal and classical education, and also because these activities were linked to leisure and the domestic. Women were seen as having particular responsibilities toward the family, including the education of the young and the creation of a congenial home.

What was the link between the craze for collecting—and recording the objects collected—and women's artistic expression? Let us take, for example, botany and medicine. Women had long been associated with flower painting and drawing. Sir Peter Lely's painting of the Capel sisters, for example, shows the Countess of Carnarvon with a sketch of a flower, which reflects the vogue for flower painting linked to the popularity of Dutch styles from the late seventeenth century. Flower painting, from the mid-eighteenth century on, was clearly aimed at a feminine audience.⁵⁰ Yet it seems apparent that women wanted to sketch and paint flowers not only for decorative purposes but also for more intellectual ones, as Bermingham suggests. Charles Darwin was encouraged to look carefully at flowers by his mother, and one of his earliest memories was of her showing him the stamens of a flower.⁵¹ In 1797, Louise Gurney, age fifteen, demonstrated her keen interest in botany, which provided her with an outlet for artistic expression.⁵² In 1796 Priscilla Wakefield promoted the study of botany as a subject for women in her *An Introduction to Botany*, an epistolary work illustrated by plates showing plants in Linnean dissection.⁵³ Mary Gartside (fl. 1781–1808), who taught drawing to young ladies, provides another example of a young woman

46. See O'Day, *Women's Agency*, 406–7.

47. In Cassandra's drawing room at Cannons was a "most magnificent large sideboard table inlaid with variety of curious Italian stones, so beautifully disposed as to exhibit birds, fruit, flowers, insects and supported by a frame elegantly enriched"; catalogue of auction at Cannons, 1747; Alatheia Howard, Countess of Arundel (d. 1654) and her husband had agents who scoured Europe for objects for the museum that was their house. The Duchess of Somerset had a collection of porcelain.

48. See S[hakespeare]B[irth]P[lace]T[rust]R[ecord]O[ffice], DR 18/20/21/1: Cassandra Willoughby Brydges, "An account of the journeys I have taken & where I have been since March 1695"; a fragmentary account of journeys in 1692 and 1693 is preserved in HEH, STB Box 2, loose sheets; see also Esther Moir, *The Discovery of Britain: The English Tourists* (1964). To these crazes we might also add those for gardening and grotto making, both of which gave scope for a lady's talents for design and drawing. Anne Laurence makes a convincing case for this in *Women in England*, 157–58.

49. Delany, *Autobiography*, 1:32; Mary to Anne Granville from Killala, September 1732.

50. Margaret Whinney and Oliver Millar, *English Art, 1625–1714* (Oxford, 1957), 281 (cited in Bermingham, *Learning to Draw*, 203; see also 202–4).

51. Healey, *Emma Darwin*, 42.

52. Louise Gurney's Journal, 9 July 1797; cited in Bermingham, *Learning to Draw*, 197.

53. See also John Lindley, *Ladies' Botany* (1834), and Jane Loudon, *Botany for Ladies* (1842).

who “pursued flower painting as a route to something else—in this case, scientific knowledge [optics] as well as a professional artistic career.” Her manual on *Ornamental Groups, descriptive of flowers, birds, shells, fruit, insects &c* (1808) both demonstrates the fashionable interests of her pupils and her own determination to teach them to draw properly before they began to paint.⁵⁴

Botany involved flower collection, pressing, and copying, and it was often in the service of medicine. There are many examples of women’s responsibilities for the administration of medicine, which involved botanically derived remedies, in early modern households. Even though John Evelyn began a collection of recipes, or receipts, for example, this responsibility eventually passed to his wife, Mary, who by his own admission became an expert.⁵⁵ It was some time, however, before women who collected plants and knew their medicinal or nutritional value saw fit to provide illustrations of them as a guide. It is hard to resist the argument that this development was closely linked to the increasing popularity of printing and engraving. Elizabeth Blackwell (ca. 1730s) supported her family with illustrations of plants supplied her by Mr. Rand, curator of the Chelsea Physick Garden. In 1737 her two-volume *Curious Herbal* appeared, a work of both botany and medicine that united these two female interests with drawing, engraving, and coloring. Mary Delany provides another example—her reputation was such that she was commissioned by Kew Gardens and the Chelsea Physic Garden to record new specimens in paper collage or “mosaick.” Other forms of collection were also in vogue. Mary Elizabeth Williams, despite the absence of her “pocket-book” for that year, recalled of 1820, “I became so fond of drawing that year and spent a great deal of time drawing and painting from nature on rice paper every butterfly that could be caught—and they were legion.”⁵⁶

Women who, like Cassandra Brydges, occupied themselves with paper cutting, shell decoration, box making, and other handicrafts,⁵⁷ may have found a deeper satisfaction in drawing and painting. “I am very glad you have taken a fancy to drawing, you

54. See Bermingham, *Learning to Draw*, 217–24, quotation at 217.

55. Frances Harris, “Living in the Neighbourhood of Science,” in L. Hunter and S. Hutton, eds., *Women, Science, and Medicine, 1500–1700: Mothers and Sisters of the Royal Society* (Stroud, U.K., 1997), 203–4.

56. Fairfax-Lucy, ed., *Mistress of Charlecote*, 26.

57. See SBPTRO, DR 18/20/21/2, Letters of Cassandra Willoughby before her marriage. In 1725 Cassandra displayed in her closet “a landskip in cutt paper” by herself; see HEH, ST 83, Inventory of Cannons, 19 June 1725. See also O’Day, *Cassandra Brydges*, Letter 208, p. 195. Mary Delany, for example, made “shell work, feather work, silhouettes, designed furniture, spun wool . . . and invented paper collage,” according to Janet Todd; see *A Dictionary of American and British Women Writers, 1660–1800* (1984), 101. Mary’s group creation of a shell grotto in Ireland in the early 1730s found an echo in that made by Sarah, Duchess of Richmond (d. 1751), and her daughter at Goodwood, Sussex. A fine example can be viewed at Woburn Abbey. Mrs. Montagu also did feather pictures. Cassandra and James Brydges displayed in their shared bedroom in St. James’s Square, *King Charles ye firsts head in feathers*, probably by the duchess. There were also two framed drawings of a bird and a rose “drawn with pencils”; see HEH, ST 83, Inventory of St. James’s Square house, 1725. For “the business of amateur art,” see Bermingham, *Learning to Draw*, 127–81, esp. 145–64, for a fascinating discussion of the place of such fancy work within this context. Laurence sees these occupations as, while demanding, “time passers” (*Women in England*, 148–49).

will find a great deal of entertainment in it," wrote Mary (Granville Pendarves) Delany to her younger sister Anne Granville in 1724. Mary dismissed the art of jappanning as something that appealed to the eyes but did not increase the understanding.⁵⁸ By the later eighteenth century, authors, publishers, and print makers were producing manuals of drawing and painting to appeal to a growing audience that included young gentlemen and ladies.⁵⁹

Women Learning to Draw and Paint

I have already mentioned the popularity of drawing masters, especially from the mid-eighteenth century onward. We know from other sources that drawing and painting were commonly taught to girls and boys, using copying techniques. John Aubrey (1626–1697) described his activities at age eight: "I then fell to drawing . . . and at nine to colours, having nobody to instruct me, copied pictures." "Professional" artists learned in the same way: Mary Beale learned by copying portraits by Van Dyck and Lely. In the 1760s Angelica Kauffman spent her time at the Florentine Accademia del Disegno copying masterpieces.⁶⁰ There are only occasional references to female artists using models for history paintings or to depict religious scenes.⁶¹ Elite women were fortunate in that their family galleries frequently contained Old Masters. Cassandra Brydges, for example, was apparently copying paintings by Titian and Raphael. In the picture room at Cannons in 1725, displayed alongside original paintings by Titian, Van Dyck, and Quentin Massys, was *King Charles the First at three different views by the Dutchess of Chandos*. In her own closet she hung at least two other copies, including one "feast of the sea gods after Rottenhamber and Brugell."⁶² Another example of learning by copying Old Masters is provided by Elizabeth Robinson, later Montagu, who confided to her bosom friend Margaret Harley that her "papa thinks he has found a remedy for [her isolation in the country life], by teaching me to draw." He had her copy "old men's heads," such as that of St. John the Baptist on a charger. Elizabeth, by her own admission, was not a very apt pupil. So despairing was she of making her portraits resemble the originals that "I threw away my pencil." She added humorously, "I have heard of some who have been famous landscape painters, others who have been

58. Delany, *Autobiography*, 1:103. On the other hand, Delany saw shell collection as a serious pursuit on a par with botany; see 1:484–86 (1734), where she regrets the stupidity of mankind for its view that shells are aesthetically pleasing but nothing more. I am grateful to Amy Froide for drawing these Delany references to my attention.

59. There had been such manuals in English since the sixteenth century.

60. On Aubrey, see Foster Watson, *Beginnings of the Teaching of Modern Subjects in England* (1909), passim, for a general account that includes this quotation. See Collins Baker and Constable, *English Painting of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries*, 57, and Angelica Goodden, *Miss Angel: The Art and World of Angelica Kauffman, Eighteenth-Century Icon* (2006), 38–39.

61. In Charles Beale's pocketbook for 1671–72 is listed Mary's painting of "a Magdalen painted from Moll Trioche, a young woman who died 1672"; Walpole, *Anecdotes*, 3:541.

62. See HEH, ST 83, Inventory of Cannons, 19 June 1725. Cassandra's copy of Van Dyck's famous tripartite portrait was apparently the only one to be displayed in an overtly "public room" in the great house. The other copy in her closet was a madonna "after Andreo Delsarto." It seems probable that the duke also counted as part of his household at Cannons a resident artist—Richardson (see also n. 91, below).

famous battle painters; but I take myself to have been the best hospital painter, for I never drew a figure that was not lame or blind.”⁶³ Her comments provide a sharp reminder of the role that natural talent played in determining whether a young gentlewoman took seriously to painting and drawing. In 1731 Mary Pendarves jokingly compared her own expertise with that of her sister Anne Granville, claiming that revealing the tips she had received from Hogarth would allow Anne to outstrip her, “for you excel me now, and when I have delivered-up my arms you will vanquish me quite.”⁶⁴ Louisa Gurney was irritated by the superior drawing abilities of her older sister Richenda.⁶⁵

The next stage was to progress to drawing and painting from nature, and Cassandra successfully made the transition, although not all did.⁶⁶ It is hard to believe that a young girl initially (if briefly) tutored by John Ray, and with her father Francis Willoughby’s example and his huge collection of natural history specimens about her, would not have been taught to draw what she saw from a very early age.⁶⁷ She and her brother brought their father’s neglected natural history collection from Middleton to Wollaton, repaired the specimens, and organized and labeled them. Francis Willoughby, as a member of the Royal Society, had been committed to the necessity for accurate observation, something his daughter appreciated. She waxed lyrical about his fine line-drawings of birds, which formed the basis of the engravings of the published *Ornithologia*. Paintings by her in her closet at Cannons in 1725 included a still-life, a landscape of a “sea port,” a painting of flowers, a painting of birds, and summer and winter scenes.⁶⁸ As we shall see, she also depicted various houses.

Accurate observation in drawing and shading permitted contemporary women to create artistic masterpieces even of their elaborate gowns. In 1740 Elizabeth Montagu created an apron for which she needed accurately drawn and embroidered flowers of several kinds, which were to be supplied by her art tutor, her friends, and her family.⁶⁹ A month later Elizabeth explained her ambitions for the garment and described the artistic processes involved and the way in which she drew upon her associates’ varied talents:

I expect to see it the finest thing in the way of work that ever was done My father is an excellent instructor, & your ladyship an admirable performer, I shall fall much short of you both in design & execution but the state of

63. Matthew Montagu, ed., *The Letters of Mrs Elizabeth Montagu* (1809); to Lady Margaret Cavendish Harley, Duchess of Portland, 3 November 1734; 21 June ?1736.

64. Delany, *Autobiography*, 1:283–84; see also Fairfax-Lucy, ed., *Mistress of Charlecote*, 23, for a later example.

65. See Bermingham, *Learning to Draw*, 199.

66. *Ibid.*, 185; Bermingham makes it clear that “in academic practice, copying from the antique preceded drawing from life.” Consider also the example of Mary and Henry Strangeways, above in the text.

67. A. C. Wood, ed., *History of the Willoughby Family* (Eton, U.K., 1958), 104, 107.

68. HEH, ST 83, Inventory of Cannons, 19 June 1725. Some of these could be copies of other paintings but, in an inventory, which generally gives such details, these were simply described as being “by the Dutches of Chandos.”

69. HEH, MO 5535, Elizabeth Robinson Montagu to Sarah (Robinson) Scott, 29 July 1740.

my affairs I will lay before that you may help & advise me. Mrs Pendarves has sent me a pretty pattern enough in black & white only outlines. It consists of auriculas anemonies a poppy roses & buds orange flowers & lillies of the vally. *To help me in shading she lent me the prints of the flowers which my Pappa said would be admirable directions if they were coloured but I have only in black & white* [emphasis added]. Now what I should be infinitely obliged to my father & you for would be to get me a pattern done by Mr Hately of auriculas in abundance Convalvalews (that is the blew flower we work in the print in the facing) the lilies you mention, poppies, & tulips (of which I have painted ones very fine) as likewise convalvalews in a picture, lilies I would have too & narcissus's & any thing else to make out the pattern which tho I would not chuse a full one, the Dutchess has a great mind for an apron & as I am obliged to work very often I had much rather be imploy'd for her than any one. Mr Achard draws very well & understands shading particularly his advice I shall always have, & Mrs Pendarves intends to come to us in six weeks time or two months & stays with us till January. The Dutchess would have me work upon a black ground because it wont dirty but if my Pappa thinks any other ground prettier I will chuse it. He would oblige her Grace extreamly who depends much upon his fancy if he would order it according to his taste . . . I never work but when I am in company & then such is the diligence of this family every body works too.⁷⁰

That women viewed their fashions as art seems probable. Both Montagu and Delany made frequent, detailed references to evening dresses, and Montagu observed with approval that the flowers with which they were embellished accurately replicated nature. The Duchess of Portland's "cloaths were embroidery upon white catten, vine leaves & convalvalews & rose buds as well shaded as it was possible." Elizabeth's sister Sarah similarly strove for accuracy: "if I had had time I would have darkened some of the seeds in the anemonys which would have covered them a little particularly the back one."⁷¹

Cassandra's portraits of family members were apparently given away as gifts, much as today we might distribute copies of photographs. Demand for such gifts appears to go back at least into the middle years of the seventeenth century: John Finch responded in 1653 to a request from his sister Anne, Lady Conway, "I thank you dearest for your affection in desiring my picture." He promised to have one made in Venice, but "the price will be your own picture in exchange," for at present he only has her "garter and hair" to comfort him. He later wrote in a letter, "Your picture will be the most acceptable thing can come from England by a messenger," but adds that he can-

70. HEH, MO 5544, Montagu to Scott, 27 August 1740.

71. HEH, MO 5601, Montagu to Scott, 5 February 1740/1; MO 5165, Scott to Montagu, 13 February 1740/1. Better known are embroideries from "nature" on drapes, such as the cockatoos on the bed hangings of Mary Blount, Duchess of Norfolk; see Rosemary Baird, *Mistress of the House: Great Ladies and Grand Houses* (2004), photograph between pp. 112 and 113.

not find a miniaturist to paint his own likeness. Her mentor, Henry More, accepted a portrait of her in 1657, noting “the often repeated pleasure I shall take in looking upon it when I have it.”⁷² Mary Beale probably learned her skill alongside her father, Rev. John Cradock, in an amateur circle of artists in Bury St. Edmunds, and she went on to perfect her art in the period before 1670 by painting portraits of family and friends and giving them away as gifts.⁷³ Margaret (Smith), Countess of Lucan (d. 1814), copied a portrait of Catherine Hyde, Duchess of Queensberry, that was exhibited in the Portland Collection.⁷⁴ It is thought that an unsigned portrait of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu displayed at Welbeck Abbey in the 1750s had found its way there as a gift from the Duchess of Portland, who was a close friend of Mary’s daughter, Lady Bute.⁷⁵ The act of giving away a portrait drew the recipient into the close circle of someone such as the first Duchess of Chandos.⁷⁶

Many of Cassandra’s paintings were apparently portraits from life, and until just before her death she was still taking the likenesses of family members.⁷⁷ We know that she sent her sister-in-law Emma Chamberlayne portraits of Henry and Emma Barnard (their mutual maternal grandparents)⁷⁸ and of Catherine (Brydges) Bourchier: “In the box was . . . Sir Henry & Lady Barnard’s pictures & one dead coloured which I drue from my sister Bourchier before she dyed.”⁷⁹ In her dressing room at the house in St. James’s Square in London, she displayed portraits of her husband, of her brother Lord Middleton, of Lord Middleton’s two sons, and “severall family pieces.”⁸⁰ Such portraits appear to have served the same purpose as the family photograph album does today, as a record and a reminder of the physical appearance of friends and family. When thirteen-year-old James Brydges, Marquis of Carnarvon, wrote an essay on

72. BL, Add. MS. 23,215, fol. 18, John Finch to Anne Conway, February 1652/3; see Sarah Hutton and Marjorie Hope Nicolson, eds., *The Conway Letters* (Oxford, 1992), 71–72. Conway apparently sat for a miniature portrait that was sent to her brother. Samuel Van Hoogstraten may have been responsible for surviving matching portraits of brother and sister. See also BL, Add. MS., 23,215, fol. 15, John Finch to Anne Conway, ca. 1652/3; and BL, Add. MS., 23,216, fol. 252, Henry More to Anne Conway, 11 May 1657. It seems that unmarried ladies would give their portraits only to young men they considered to be appropriate suitors; see Delany, *Autobiography*, 1:133: “At last he [Lord Baltimore] begged me to give him my picture in miniature to take abroad with him. I told him it could not be, that though I had a great opinion of his honor, I did not think it right, and hoped he would not be offended at my refusing it.”

73. Dewing, ed., *Mary Beale*, 1; on the basis of extracts from Charles Beale’s pocketbooks for 1661 and 1671/2.

74. John Kerslake, *Early Georgian Portraits* (1977), 224.

75. *The Yale Edition of Walpole’s Correspondence*, ed. W. S. Lewis et al., vol. 35 (New Haven, Conn., 1973), 271.

76. There are other examples of women giving portraits to friends. See, for example, HEH, HM6660 Suffolk Papers, letter from Thomas Killigrew to Henrietta Hobart Howard, Countess of Suffolk, ca. 1715: “pray let me know madam where the painter lives that drew the picture you gave of yr self to Mrs [Mary] Bellenden.”

77. Cf. George Romney, *Caroline, Viscountess Clifton, and Lady Elizabeth Spencer* (1794; now at the Huntington), which shows Caroline sketching her sister from life, after first copying a statue for practice.

78. Perhaps, but not necessarily, executed by herself.

79. O’Day, *Cassandra*, Letter 437, p. 323; to Sister Chamberlayne, 8 July 1735. “Dead colouring” was the first layer of a painting.

80. HEH, ST 83, Inventory of St. James’s Square, 1725.

Cannons in 1745, he noted that in a "little closet belonging to the dutchess . . . most of the pictures are of the late Dutchesses painting one is Mrs Vincent late of Chelsea that was:⁸¹ & the late Bp Robinson's lady,"⁸² who were her close friends and relatives. As noted above, the duke had multiple copies made of the family portrait of himself, his sons, and their stepmother, Cassandra.⁸³ This seems consistent with what is known of the market for portraits in the post-Restoration period. One of the most pronounced features of Mary Beale's business was the seemingly insatiable demand by her clientele for copies of portraits, many of them originally executed by Lely. Mary often rendered these copies as half-length portraits or as miniatures. She noted, "Lady Lowther's face coppied for Mrs Robson at the third painting." The large number of Lowther portraits, many of them copies, suggests that most were intended for third parties.⁸⁴ Some at least of the Duke of Chandos's copies were also designed for distribution. Such portrait collections were of a different kind from paintings by Old Masters, such as those owned by the duke himself. With family portraits the emphasis was on the likeness as well as the aesthetic appeal of the painting,⁸⁵ and their monetary value was regarded as relatively trivial. This is clearly illustrated by Cassandra's gifts to her friend Mrs. [Lisle] Dunbar of Antigua and to her cousin and close friend, Mrs. Brydges of Avington, Hampshire. In the accompanying letter she wrote: "we return you our humble thanks, & hope you will give us leave to find out something in return for these civilities you have shewn us, more valuable than the pictures you desire & which shall be sent you soon."⁸⁶ Nevertheless, the duchess could be hypercritical of images of herself and showed dissatisfaction with most of the recent portraits (apparently made by others)

81. See also HEH, ST 83, Inventory of Cannons, 19 June 1725, on this portrait by the duchess, which hung in her closet. Mrs. Rebecca Vincent was Cassandra's cousin.

82. HEH, James Brydges, Marquis of Carnarvon, essay on Cannons, ca. 1745. This portrait is perhaps the "Mrs Robinson in miniature by the Dutchess of Chandos" mentioned as hanging in the duchess's closet in HEH, ST 83. The portrait was of Cassandra's close friend and cousin Emma (Charlton Cornwallis) Robinson, who was the widow of Thomas Cornwallis (1670–1703) and of Bishop John Robinson (d. 1723). She died on 26 January 1748.

83. This seems to be the Brydges family portrait held by the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. It was once thought to be a portrait of James Brydges and his first wife, Mary, with their sons, but the timing and a further letter, which indicates that Brydges had copies made of this family portrait by "Mr Lence" in autumn 1713 when he was married to Cassandra, suggest that this portrayed Brydges, Cassandra, and Brydges's two sons by his first wife. By December 1713 Kneller was painting Lady Child, Cassandra's mother. See HEH, ST 57, vol. 9, p. 281, 7 December 1713, to Sir Godfrey Kneller. A similar practice, commissioning multiple copies of portraits for distribution in the family of Caroline Lennox Fox, is noted in Baird, *Great Ladies and Grand Houses*, 122–23.

84. Bodl. Lib., MS. Rawlinson, 8^o 572, 31 July 1677; in June and July 1677 no fewer than six portraits of Lady Lowther (two of them "heads") were being painted; simultaneously, half-length portraits and several "heads" of "Old Lady Lowther" and "Old Sir John Lowther" were underway. Some of these were specified as copies.

85. Even a thirteen-year-old boy could discriminate between an "excellent" piece of portrait painting and a poor likeness; see HEH, James Brydges's description of Cannons in 1745: "a picture of my Lady Dutchess painting my Lords picture it is a fine peice but not like."

86. O'Day, *Cassandra*, Letter 197, p. 190; to Mrs. Dunbar at Antigua, 27 March 27 1724/5. Cf. Raymond A. Anselment, *The Remembrances of Elizabeth Freke, 1671–1714*, Camden Society, 5th ser., vol. 18 (Cambridge, 2001): "these three [family portraits] given me by my deere sister Norton. E. Freke" (p. 183).

and copies of them. The wording of the letter is open to several contradictory interpretations. Had the duchess made the copies or not?

I wish the pictures which you desired were better worth your acceptance. That of my Lord is copied from one which we think the best of any done for him, & for myself I should very willingly have sate for an original could I have been pleased with any lately drawn for me, but finding I make a much worse picture now than I would willingly send to a strange country, have rather chose to make the best I could of my self, & sent you the copy of a picture drawn for me many years agoe. I fear the pictures so newly painted may grow yellow with being kept close from the air during their voyage but hope they will soon after recover their complections by having as much air as you can give them. I wish they may please you.⁸⁷

Whatever Cassandra's opinion of her own work was, others valued it considerably. Charles Gildon fixed upon her artistic skills in his poem of 1718:

Now from her pencil the mute poesie flows,
And on the canvas some bright wonder glows;
Raphael and Titian there together shine,
For colour this, and that for great design.
Now with her readie needle paints the lawn,
Where various figures are so finely drawn.
Now with her fingers plies the gentle loom,
Then with her works adorns each spacious room.
A muse herself, the muses she'll defend,
And to their cause her glad assistance lend.⁸⁸

Allowing for poetic license and the exaggeration expected from someone seeking patronage, it is nevertheless interesting that Gildon chose to comment on her skill (when she was still Marchioness of Carnarvon) with pencil, brush, embroidery thread, and tapestry needle. The duke again singled out this aspect of his wife's many accomplishments in 1719, commissioning from the artist Van der Myne a double portrait of himself and Cassandra in which she is drawing the duke's portrait as he poses in classical Roman attire. This portrait was still displayed at Cannons when her successor, Duchess Lydia, lived there.⁸⁹ Walpole, after a visit to Cannons almost ten years after Cassandra's death, wrote of her fame as an artist: "His [the duke's] late lady was a great painter: there is an admirable picture of her, drawing the duke's portrait, by one Vandermine. He is in a Roman habit."⁹⁰ There was little that was private about Cassandra's art.

87. O'Day, *Cassandra*, Letter 208, pp. 195–96; to Mrs Dunbar at Antigua, 9 September 1725.

88. Gildon, "Cannons, or The Vision."

89. HEH, James Brydges, Marquis of Carnarvon, description of Cannons in 1745.

90. *Walpole's Correspondence*, vol. 30 (Oxford, 1961), 61. The painting was also viewed by the artist John Van Gool in the early 1750s; see J. Van Gool, *Nieuwe Schonburg der Nederlantsche Kunstschilders en schilderessen* (1751), 41–42, 44–45; cited in P. Toynbee, ed., *Letters of Horace Walpole* (1903–25)

Very occasionally we are treated to Cassandra's opinions of portraits she has been sent by relatives, opinions that may provide clues to her attitude to her own art: "my Lord & I had the pleasure to find at our house [in London] . . . the most agreeable present which you & my cousin Brydges have made us of your pictures. His I think by much the best I ever saw of Richardson's⁹¹ painting & your's we reckon very like but wish it had been a better likeness. Both my Lord & self are at a loss how to express our selves thankfull enough for so valuable a present, but are very sure if you could know how much we esteem them you would not think them ill bestowed." Cassandra noted the aesthetic value of the painting but questioned its accuracy. Here, there seem to be echoes of the influence of Fellows of the Royal Society, who proclaimed the superiority of painting from life.⁹²

Charles Beale, a member of the Royal Society, praised most those portraits by his wife, Mary, that were superior "both for painting and likenes." She herself thought that "flattery and dissimulation is a kind of mock friendship" and certainly portrayed her husband "warts and all."⁹³ To some degree this echoes the views of Mary Delany, who made it clear that, above all, a portrait should be "like": "I have released Lady Sunderland from her promise of giving me her picture by Zinck, to have it done by Hogarth. I think he takes a much greater likeness, and that is what I shall value my friend's picture for, more than for the excellence of the painting." Of a crayon drawing of her sister Anne, she lamented, "I have a picture too, but alas! a feint, feint resemblance! I am always vexed as well as pleased when I look at it, for it certainly is a bad likeness, and not well painted; you are much better drawn in a place where the air cannot fade you, and where justice is done you without flattery; there are not only the outlines and the air of the countenance, the life and sweetness of the eyes, but that sensible penetrating look that fairly shows how well the form is animated."⁹⁴

The ability to draw and paint "landskips" was also regarded as important, but like the family portrait it was considered an expression of the individual's experience.⁹⁵ Such landscapes may have been seen largely as a pictorial record of the houses the elite

supplement 3 (Oxford, 1925), 365 n. 17. This picture (by now cut to show just the Duke of Chandos) was donated to the British Museum in 1762 by James Farqharson, formerly Chandos's secretary. Its cleaning in 1975 revealed the duchess's easel, paints, and foot. For further discussion, see John Kerslake, *Early Georgian Portraits*, 36, and J. Kerslake, "The Duke of Chandos' Missing Duchess," *National Trust Studies* (1981).

91. Jonathan Richardson (1665–1745) was the leading portrait painter of his day, after the deaths of Godfrey Kneller and Michael Dahl.

92. See Abraham Cowley's famous "Prefatory Verses" to Sprat's *History of the Royal Society*: "He before his sight must place / The natural and living face / The real object must command / Each judgement of his eye, and motion of his hand."

93. Charles Beale's Notebook, 1680/1, National Gallery, 17 October 1681; Mary Beale, "Discourse on Friendship," BL, Harley MS. 6828; Dewing, ed., *Mary Beale*, passim.

94. Delany, *Autobiography*, 1:283, 280; in HEH, MO 1007, Elizabeth Montagu contrasted the arts of painting and poetry—opining that whereas painting relies on accurate representation, "One of the great qualities of a poet is invention & I suppose you chose such a subject on purpose to give scope to your imagination to show what you did not find you could make."

95. The *View of Windsor* painted in 1723 by Lady Diana Spencer (1710–1735), later Duchess of Bedford, provides a good example; see Greer, *Obstacle Race*, 286.

occupied or visited and the places they took in on their tours at home and abroad.⁹⁶ It was certainly accepted that women as well as men should make such tours and should prepare for them by studying guidebooks, travel journals, and, in some cases, illustrated works of ancient history.⁹⁷ Mary Delany kept a sketchbook of her travels around Ireland in the early 1730s.⁹⁸ Whether making such a record should be regarded as a peculiarly feminine accomplishment is moot: John Locke had noted that drawing should be studied “as a thing very useful for a gentleman on several occasions and especially if he travel.”⁹⁹ In the 1790s Elizabeth Howard Manners, Duchess of Rutland, was encouraged to illustrate her husband’s diaries, which were later published. During tours abroad she developed a keen interest in architecture. It seems that her sketches of a tour in 1819 were “finished” by a Mr. Holworthy, a professional water-colorist.¹⁰⁰ In the early 1800s the Hicks Beach daughters painted landscapes, and both Mary Fox-Strangeways Talbot and her brother Henry expressed frustration about their inability to capture the scene at places they visited.¹⁰¹ There are several references in the Wedgwood papers to Charlotte Wedgwood’s drawings documenting her travels: in 1822, when she was twenty-five, Charlotte made a “pretty little drawing” of Rievaulx Abbey and on a grand tour that the family took in 1825 she made a point of painting the landscapes they viewed.¹⁰²

Sometimes, however, this ability to observe and record from nature was employed to commemorate the unusual. Mary Delany, unexpectedly encountering an old man’s cottage near Creswell Craggs in 1756, wrote that she “was too much entertained with the scene to lose sight of it one moment, and . . . took an imperfect sketch of one part.” Landscape also offered Mary opportunities to develop her imagination: “I have now in hand two frames of shells, . . . for two drawings I have done for the Duchess; one a copy of one of my Cornbury views, the other a fancy by way of companion.”¹⁰³

Evidence that Cassandra painted landscapes is by no means unusual, compared with that available for some other women of the period. It is the *survival* of landscapes done before 1750 by women that is rare. One of Cassandra’s drawings, of Thoresby Hall, Nottinghamshire, however, does survive.¹⁰⁴ It is undated but is probably an

96. See Norfolk Record Office, MSS. 6184 and 6256, containing twenty-four pencil sketches by Richenda Gurney Cunningham done in the 1840s.

97. See Healey, *Emma Darwin*, 81ff, on the Wedgwood grand tour to Paris, Geneva, Naples, Venice, Florence, and Rome for approximately six months in 1825.

98. Delany, *Autobiography*, 1:480.

99. See Watson, *Teaching of Modern Subjects*, 146.

100. John Henry Manners, fifth Duke of Rutland, *Travels in Great Britain with engravings from the drawings of the Duchess of Rutland: Journal of a Tour around the southern coasts of England* (1805); and Manners, *A Tour through part of Belgium, and the Rhennish provinces (with plates from sketches by E. Manners, Duchess of Rutland); Correspondence of the Duchess of Rutland and Sir Frederick Trench*, vol. 1, 15 December 1821.

101. Martin, *Wives and Daughters*, 232–33.

102. Healey, *Emma Darwin*, 76, 81.

103. Delany, *Autobiography*, 3:441–42, 473–74; Delany to Mrs. Dewes from Bulstrode, 29 December 1757.

104. HEH, STB Box 1 (2), 45. Thoresby was close to Cassandra’s former home, Wollaton Hall, Nottingham. Thoresby was owned by Evelyn Pierrepont, Duke of Kingston-upon-Hull.

early effort. That she made other drawings of places that were important to her (and perhaps collected similar drawings and paintings executed by others) seems probable. Her mother, Emma Child, added to notes for her final will, in shaky hand, the words: "The picture of Wollaton is Lady Dutchesses own piktüre which I desire she may have. Em. Child."¹⁰⁵ That Cassandra created pictures specially to ornament Wollaton seems likely. Some of these were copies of existing paintings, perhaps by well-known artists. Her comments suggest a prolific output, but she was self-critical:

Many of the pictures which I drew myself are only fit for the fire. That of my brother & which I copyed from Lady Middleton's picture, if I should ever see Wollaton again & be able to mend (together with a picture which I dead coulour'd for the closet chimney), I would try to paint again that I might make that better, & then perhaps I should desire to have them & some others of the pictures, my self. Till then I must wish they were better & that they together with the linen china, japan boxes, &c were worth your acceptance or fit for your Lady's use.¹⁰⁶

Art historians have noted the growth of interest in the arts in England in the later Stuart and early Georgian periods. It is time to recognize that Mary Astell's attitude was not representative, and that an aptitude for drawing and painting was not regarded by either men or women as a merely "social" attribute. A woman who could draw the family "pile," create clothing and furnishings resplendent with realistic flowers and foliage, make copies of family portraits or even draw and paint them from life had skills that were highly valuable to the family. She was the equivalent of the modern family camera.

Women Artists, Connoisseurs, and the Family

Some of the evidence, much of it belonging to the early eighteenth century, suggests that portraits were used to cement friendships. Women best known for their other literary and artistic activities—Mary Delany, Anne Granville, Elizabeth Robinson Montagu, Mary Wortley Montagu, Mary Bellenden, Margaret Cavendish Harley, Judith Tichborne, and Lady Sunderland among them—are known to have exchanged portraits and to have treasured them.

Possessing and displaying portraits of family and friends emphasized publicly the connection with the person depicted. The effect upon Horace Walpole caused by the decorative scheme of Welbeck Abbey was as the owner desired: "It is impossible to describe the bales of Cavendishes, Harleys, Holleses, Veres and Ogles . . . all their

105. N[ottingham]U[niversity]L[ibrary], Middleton Papers, Mi Av 143/18/6. Also cited in Dorothy Johnston, "Emma Child, nee Barnard, formerly Willoughby (1644–1725): Records of the Life of a Gentlewoman," in John Beckett, ed., *Nottinghamshire Past: Essays in Honour of Adrian Henstock* (Cardiff, 2003), 75.

106. O'Day, *Cassandra*, Letter 161, pp. 166–68; to my nephew [Francis] Willoughby, 14 November 1723. Lady Middleton's portrait is possibly that by Sir Godfrey Kneller. "Japan boxes" were japanned.

histories transcribed; all their arms, crests, devices, sculpted on chimneys.”¹⁰⁷ Portraits hung in such places were often produced by “professional” artists, prominent or not so prominent. Elizabeth Montagu, dressed as Anne Boleyn, sat for Zincke, as did Margaret Harley and Mary Pendarves.¹⁰⁸ A surprising number of Willoughby/Child/Brydges portraits have survived, including those of Lady Emma Child, and Elizabeth [Rothwell] Willoughby, her daughter-in-law; of the More Molyneux at Loseley; and of Cassandra and James Brydges and their children, John and Henry. Many were by important male portraitists of the day: Dahl, Richardson, Kneller. Preserving and improving this family gallery was an ongoing commitment. James Brydges had had his first wife sit for her portrait.¹⁰⁹ We have noted above the flurry of such activity when Cassandra became James Brydges’s wife. The portrait of Emma Child’s deceased husband, also named Francis, was the subject of a letter from his devoted sister, Lettice Wendy, in 1676. Emma Child spent £3.3s. for alterations to Adriana Verelst’s portrait of Sir Francis Willoughby sometime between 1717 and Emma’s death in 1725. On 23 July 1725 George Schubert presented her with a bill “for work and material to inlarge Sir Frances Willoughby Piktur.”¹¹⁰ Cassandra’s step-grandson, James, Marquis of Carnarvon (later third Duke of Chandos) appears to have had Mary (Lake) Brydges’s full-length portrait carefully restored in the 1750s and also to have commissioned a new portrait of her using a copy of Dahl’s head-and-shoulders portrait.¹¹¹ Cassandra herself executed at least some of the copying of family portraits and new (and more intimate) family portraits. Cassandra’s obsession with her father’s family extended to her production of a two-volume history of the Willoughby family based on original research.¹¹² Her portraits of family members and her gifts of such portraits echoed this interest.

The word “publicly” is used advisedly. “Private” galleries made a statement about a family in a very public way. The aristocracy and gentry adorned their houses from the sixteenth century onward with portrait galleries commemorating their ancestors and trumpeting their current connections. Bess of Hardwick’s gallery was intended “to celebrate her family.” Most of its seventy-six pictures were portraits, twenty-six of them depicting her relatives; the majority of the rest were of

107. *Walpole’s Correspondence*, Walpole to Bentley, August 1756, 35:270–71.

108. HEH, MO 5526, Elizabeth Robinson Montagu to Sarah (Robinson) Scott; MO 744, Anne Donnellan to Elizabeth (Robinson) Montagu, 9 April 1740. There was a marked fashion for posing as historical or exotic figures in costume. In the 1680s Cassandra and her family had played a variety of charades, dressing in the inherited costumes of their ancestors in order to imitate the family portraits; see Wood, *Willoughby Family*, 135–38.

109. Michael Dahl (1656–1743) was a Swedish portrait painter who settled in England in 1688 and became fashionable. Sir Godfrey Kneller (1646–1723) was a German-born painter who settled in London in 1676 and was appointed court painter. He was knighted in 1691 and in 1715 George III made him a baronet. The portrait of Brydges’s first wife was by Dahl; HEH, ST 26, Thurs: 19 [August 1697]: “about 6: I went to Mr Doll’s, to look after my wife’s picture.” For Richardson, see n. 91.

110. NUL, Middleton Papers, Mi Av 143/36/22, Lettice Wendy to Emma Willoughby at Middleton, 18 March [1676]; 141; NUL, Middleton Papers, Mi Av 143/19/19; NUL, Middleton Papers, Mi Av 143/23/1–39. On Verelst, see n. 126.

111. See HEH, STB Financial Box 11 (25d), 21 March 1754.

112. See O’Day, *Women’s Agency*, 406–7.

monarchs.¹¹³ Walpole described Lady Betty Germaine's house at Drayton, Northamptonshire, as "covered with portraits."¹¹⁴ A woman of lesser means, Elizabeth Freke, had on display in her parlor "1 picture of my deer fathers, given me by my deer sister Norton" and in the dining room "1 long pictture of my deere sister Norton 1 long picture of my deere neece Gettings, her only daughter, 1 monument picture of hers, . . . 1 long picture of my wretched selfe."¹¹⁵ The fashion for portraiture enveloped both men and women, and anyone with pretensions to distinguished lineage.

The "family rooms" found in stately homes were in fact family portrait galleries.¹¹⁶ Attention has recently been drawn to the value of portraits as "documents designed to chronicle specific details of lives, ally sitters with certain social groups, emphasize virtues intended to prompt admiration and record an individual's place in the history of a family, institution or nation." Portrait commissions often coincided with a marriage or a birth or an inheritance entered into.¹¹⁷ At Boughton, in Northamptonshire, a gallery was created that consisted of modern full-length portraits of imaginary ancestors in the supposed dress of their times.¹¹⁸ Family portraits were important to aristocratic families. Louise de Keroualle surrounded herself in exile in France with them.¹¹⁹ In about 1760, Caroline Lennox Fox created a picture gallery at Holland House to exhibit portraits of her and her husband's families. To the south of this gallery were portraits of Caroline's royal ancestor, Charles II, and his mistress Louise de Keroualle and portraits by Kneller of their son the first Duke of Richmond and his duchess; of Caroline's parents, the second Duke and his Duchess, and so on. Portraits of Caroline and her siblings by Allan Ramsay and those by Sir Joshua Reynolds of Henry and Caroline, their son Stephen, "Ste," Mary, Duchess of Richmond, and Caroline's brother George Lennox were likewise displayed. But it was Reynolds's group portrait of Lady Sarah Lennox, Lady Susan Fox-Strangeways, and Charles James Fox at Holland House and a full-length one of Lady Louisa that dominated the gallery. The effect was to accentuate the status of the present generations above that of their ancestors. Similarly, Henrietta Cavendish Holles, Countess of Oxford and Mortimer, remodeled Welbeck Abbey, Nottinghamshire, as a family seat for her descendants, and to accommodate "All the family paintings of the Cavendishes, Holles, Pierpoints, Harleys, etc. Noblemen, Ladys and gentlemen in any way related." She had spent her widowhood "in collecting and monumenting the portraits and

113. Laurence, *Women in England*, 156.

114. *Walpole's Correspondence*, Walpole to George Montagu, 23 July 1763, vol. 10 (Oxford, 1941), 89–90.

115. Anselment, *Remembrances of Elizabeth Freke*, 178–83.

116. See HEH, ST 83. Later homes, such as the Rothschild mansion at Waddesden, near Aylesbury, attest the continuation of this tradition into the 1890s and early twentieth century.

117. Kate Retford, *The Art of Domestic Life: Family Portraiture in Eighteenth-Century England* (New Haven, Conn., and London, 2006), 6. The large number of Lowther portraits executed by Mary Beale in 1676/7 apparently followed the marriage between Sir John Lowther and Catherine Thynne. Examples of family galleries include not only the well-known but also the obscure: see, for instance, the collection retained in part of Blithfield Hall, Staffordshire, which contains sixteenth-century Bagot marriage portraits.

118. BL, Add MS. 5834, fols. 41–63.

119. Baird, *Great Ladies and Grand Houses*, 89.

reliques of all the great families from which she descended, and which centred in her.” Rosemary Baird rightly cites her as a prime example of the woman as “guardian of family history.”¹²⁰ Yet, if descent was important, family history nonetheless culminated in the present.

Although it may well be true that portraits of this kind were not exhibited in public galleries, as presently understood, until the late nineteenth century,¹²¹ it is a mistake to believe that family portraiture was always for family consumption alone. Great houses were opened to the public more and more frequently in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries,¹²² and together with their gardens could be viewed by the public on particular days and times. Cannons, in Cassandra’s time, was no exception. The Duke of Chandos farmed out the right to show Cannons to his steward, James Farquarson, in one of his attempts to save money on the estate. He and Cassandra, meanwhile, spent more and more time at Shaw Hall, Berkshire. “When the steward is at home the house [Cannons] be shown to no person whatever without his leave and at other times that it be not shown to any but such as have the appearance of gentle people,” ordered the duke. Moreover, the house was to be closed on Sundays. In the period 1690–1713 Cassandra was familiar with the great houses and gardens of the Beauforts at Badminton, of the Earls of Bath at Longleat, and of Lord Pembroke at Wilton, near Salisbury. She visited other houses in Yorkshire, Worcestershire, Monmouth, Wiltshire, Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, and Bedfordshire.¹²³ In 1756, Mary Delany recorded her delight in the family portrait gallery at Bolsover in Derbyshire.¹²⁴ Elizabeth Seymour Smythson, Countess and then Duchess of Northumberland in her own right, traveled extensively from country house to country house and in her diary of the 1750s set out to describe all of them, from Castle Howard to Woburn Abbey and from Ragley Hall to Stowe.¹²⁵ Elizabeth Montagu visited many houses and gardens in Berkshire and further afield, including Beaulieu, the Montagu home in Hampshire; Lord Lyttleton’s new house at Hagley, Worcestershire; Garrick’s villa at Hampton; and Alexander Pope’s garden at Twickenham. In these public spaces the families were vaunted.

We should not, however, overstate the case. It could well be that “amateur” portraits were treated differently from fashionable “professional” portrayals of family

120. *Walpole’s Correspondence*, Walpole to Bentley, August 1756, 35:270–71. “Monumenting” meant inscribing. See Baird, *Great Ladies and Grand Houses*, 60. Delany was aware of this function of family portrait collections, although she does not attribute this to any particular individual, whether male or female (*Autobiography*, 3:442–43).

121. Bermingham, in *Learning to Draw*, argues that George Romney’s *Caroline, Viscountess Clifton, and Lady Elizabeth Spencer* (1794) was commissioned by their father, the fourth Duke of Marlborough, for private consumption only because it was not exhibited to “the public” until the late nineteenth century (p. 185).

122. See the comment about public exhibition of the embroidery paintings of Caroline Conway, formerly Countess of Aylesbury in Walpole, *Anecdotes of Painting*, 3:719–20.

123. HEH, STB, Box 14 (55) Duke of Chandos to James Farquarson, 8 October 1731; and 18 November 1731. SBPTRO, DR 18/20/21/1; SBPTRO, DR 18/20/21/1.

124. Delany, *Autobiography*, 3:442–43.

125. James Greig, *The Diaries of a Duchess: Extracts from the Diaries of the First Duchess of Northumberland, 1716–1776* (1926); cited in Baird, *Great Ladies and Grand Houses*, 170.

members. According to the 1725 inventories of the Duke and Duchess of Chandos's houses in Edgware (Cannons) and London (St. James's Square), the only one of the duchess's paintings on display in an obviously public space was her copy of Van Dyck's masterpiece, the portrait of Charles I. Generally, paintings attributed to her seem to have been confined to her private rooms and, possibly, to those of the duke. (In the inventory of their shared bedroom and closet at St. James's Square, for instance, portraits of the duke, still-lives, paintings of flowers, and heads are unattributed and given no monetary value, and these were probably by the duchess.) The "family room" at Cannons certainly contained a large number of family portraits, but not one was attributed to Cassandra. Instead, there were individual portraits of the duke's four sisters, Elizabeth Dawson, Emma Chamberlayne, Mary Leigh, and Catherine Bouchier, by one of the duke's favorite portrait painters, Mrs. Verelst;¹²⁶ Sir Peter Lely's portraits of Lady Rich, Sir Lancelot, and Lady Essex Lake, and Mr. Franklin; and Sir Godfrey Kneller's portrait of the duke and duchess, and their sons John and Henry.¹²⁷ Cassandra and other women painted portraits of relatives, but it seems that in general their efforts were kept private and displayed in rooms open only to a chosen few guests—such as Walpole. Nonetheless, this display of family portraits before members of the family and friends was important, and straddled the so-called public/private divide.

Conclusion

Cassandra Willoughby Brydges's artistic activities add to our knowledge of elite women's participation in the visual arts. We know something not only about the types of work she produced but also about why she drew or painted them, where they were displayed, and what she and her husband thought about them. Looking beyond her modest protestations, we can discern the value she believed her drawings and paintings would have for her brother and his family, and for other friends and relatives. We can place her efforts at portrait making in the context of her authorship of a family history, of her natal family's portrait collection, and of her marital family's use of portraits as gifts.

Through the mid-seventeenth century it seems that drawing (not painting) was taught in at least some schools but simply as an adjunct of writing. It could have

126. This is probably Maria Verelst (1680–1744), who was a daughter of Harman Verelst (1641/2–1699), portrait painter, a niece of Simon Verelst, famed for his flower paintings, sister of Cornelis Verelst (1667–1734) and aunt of William Verelst, an accomplished portraitist. Maria studied with both Harman and Simon and made a career for herself in England. Mrs. Verelst was also responsible for a painting of the Duke of Chandos in the dressing room, of the duke and duchess in the chamber, portraits of the Chandos sons, John and Henry, and of Lord Castlemain's two children (the Duchess of Chandos's nephews), a portrait of Lady Castlemain, and a small "landskip" in another dressing room. At the London house in the "salon" were a full-length portrait of the duchess and others of the duke's mother, Lady Chandos; of his father, Lord Chandos, and three other portraits; in the duke's "visiting room" was her portrait of the Duchess of Chandos. These were given a low value when compared to portraits by Lely and Kneller. However, the portraitist could have been Adriana Verelst. It seems reasonable to suppose that Adriana belonged to the same family, although I have found no trace of her in modern art histories. She appears to have married into Cassandra Willoughby's mother's family, and this may explain why she was selected to paint a portrait for Emma Child.

127. HEH, ST 83.

been taught more informally at home; there were certainly manuals available in English. It is probable that girls as well as boys received some elementary instruction in it. A few women, especially wives or daughters of artists, specialized in painting or limning for a living. In general, girls might, in the course of their embroidery and tapestry work, create and work designs and drawings. If they did, then something happened in the mid-to-late seventeenth century to distinguish painting and drawing from the creation of such designs.

A change appears to have occurred during the so-called Century of Revolution, so that by the late seventeenth century elite women in general were *expected* to be proficient in drawing and painting, as skills apart from their application in practical or domestic activities. This seems to echo a new emphasis upon drawing as a useful skill for both men and women from the 1640s onward. Women achieved proficiency through copying masterpieces and through constant practice, which included the ubiquitous self-portraits, although some had the benefit of instruction from drawing or painting masters and access to printed manuals. They, like Cassandra Willoughby Brydges, Mary Granville Pendarves Delany, Elizabeth Robinson Montagu, Mary Cradock Beale, and Susanna Evelyn, had the great advantage of being in the neighborhood of great art. They had been trained to see and to record, and several came under the influence of the Royal Society, with its emphasis on accurate observation and record keeping. Some painted self-portraits and often, apparently, to a high standard. It is unfortunate that identified examples of their art, and especially their portraiture, do not in general survive.¹²⁸ They discussed their painting and drawing (and other creative activities) among themselves.¹²⁹ A letter from Cassandra to her friend in Antigua in 1725 indicates the opportunities for new creative ventures opened up by contact with the colonies and plantations of the New World.¹³⁰ They also shared an appreciation of the artistic endeavors of others—from great masters to copyists—and enjoyed possessing and exhibiting works by other artists. Mary Delany (who had watched Hogarth paint and who had conversed with him about his technique) wrote: “I cannot say I

128. Consider the small percentage of Mary Beale’s extensive portfolio that survived, and also the fact that some contemporarily well-known artists, such as Sarah Broman, are apparently entirely unrepresented. Germaine Greer, noting the popularity of pastel drawing among women, surmises that few examples of such art survived because of the fragility of the items themselves and the fact that fixatives were in their infancy; see Greer, *Obstacle Race*, 285–86. The transience of so many “works” of art executed by women may also be explained by Juliet Fleming’s argument that writing was often executed on a whitewashed wall. This finds an interesting echo in the example of Frances Reynolds and other siblings of Joshua Reynolds who practiced their drawings on a whitewashed wall in their home. See Fleming, *Graffiti and the Writing Arts*, passim, and Greer, *Obstacle Race*, 30–31.

129. Henrietta (Hyde) Scott (d. 1730), of whom Jonathan Swift wrote in 1713, “I did not like her, she paints too much,” was welcome at the Chandos’s dinner table at Cannons in the 1720s. Mary Delany frequently discussed such matters with friends and with her sister Ann Granville in the 1720s and 1730s; *Autobiography and Correspondence*, vol. 1. Elizabeth Robinson’s letters contain similar discussions with friends and family in the 1730s and 1740s.

130. O’Day, *Cassandra*, Letter 208, pp. 195–96; to Mrs. Dunbar, 9 September 1725; this point is underscored in HEH, MO 264, Elizabeth (Robinson) Montagu to the Duchess of Portland, 3 December 1736, where Elizabeth reports asking her seafaring brother to bring back colorful parrot feathers from the East Indies for the duchess.

like Mr Lafountain's painting, he does not understand the drawing part so well as he ought; but I am grown passionately fond of Hogarth's painting, there is more sense in it than any I have seen."¹³¹ We know that by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, part of the London and spa seasons for both men and women consisted of visiting galleries and exhibitions. In the 1770s Sukey Wedgwood (Charles Darwin's mother) attended school in Chelsea and was taken by Thomas Bentley to plays, concerts, and art galleries. The water-colorist Copley Fielding attracted both female viewers and students by staging an exhibition in 1830. Tours abroad included visits to both major and minor collections.¹³² Women showed off their own works of art to one another. The artistic prowess of women themselves was generally regarded with pride by their spouses and/or parents. Although drawing and painting were apparently regarded by some as acceptable pastimes for bored young women, their skill was also self-consciously put to good use by themselves and their kin in the service of family and house.

The division between amateur and professional, often assumed by historians of this period, is artificial. Some women artists were regarded as experts, even though they certainly did not produce art for a living. The example of Mary Beale (who slipped so easily from "amateur" to "professional") underscores this point. Similarly, a separation between public and private is difficult to sustain. Women produced portraits and landscapes for many purposes: as gifts that bound others to them with ties of affection or patronage; as decoration for the spaces they occupied; as a record of people they loved or places they remembered fondly; as memorials for their dead; as items to be sold for charity. These female aristocratic artists evidently produced and displayed their work in the context of family and connection. However, the sparse evidence suggests that they did not display their own efforts in parts of their houses that were regularly opened to the wider public or necessarily seen by large numbers of social visitors. Nevertheless, their practical acquaintance with the great masters and with the world of the auction house did enable them to participate in the conversation of their menfolk and excited the interest of their fathers, husbands, and brothers. Their own artistic prowess might, as in Cassandra's case, have become part of their "fame" that was blazed abroad.

We may today treat galleries of family portraits with something approaching boredom, and the "private" efforts and "public" commissions they contained chiefly as examples of changing fashions and styles of portraiture. But we should recognize their importance in helping to define concepts of family and self for commissioners, sitters, and owners alike, and the role of women in producing, collecting, and displaying them.

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131. See Delany's comments on Hogarth's superior skills in her *Autobiography*, 1:283; see also Susanna "Sukey" Wedgwood's visit in the 1780s to see Joseph Wright of Derby's paintings and her intelligent comments about them to her father Josiah (Healey, *Emma Darwin*, 29).

132. Healey, *Emma*, 24, 115. See pp. 83–87 on the response of the Wedgwood daughters to various artists and works of art.

ABSTRACT

Historians have assumed that women in England, prior to the later eighteenth century, did not engage in serious artistic activity, unless they hailed from the families of male artists. Rosemary O'Day uses the prism provided by the papers of Cassandra Willoughby Brydges (1670–1735), who was herself an artist, to determine whether this was indeed the case. Drawing upon a variety of original sources and interdisciplinary perspectives, she explains that art, and particularly portraiture, for many elite women and certainly for Cassandra, was put to many social uses within both domestic and more public spheres. O'Day thus implicitly questions the polarities of amateur and professional, and of public and private art. Keywords: Cassandra Willoughby Brydges, Mary Delany, Elizabeth Robinson Montagu, “public consumption” and female artists 1670–1820, female artists in relation to touring and topography as well as collecting, classifying, and recording